

1830-1831

An Unsuccessful Move: Louisiana's First Capital Outside New Orleans

"The seat of government after a long contest has at length been removed to Donaldsonville . . . Let us at last hope for the best-"

-C.N. Conrad, U.S Senator, to his sister Frances
New Orleans 1/28/1824

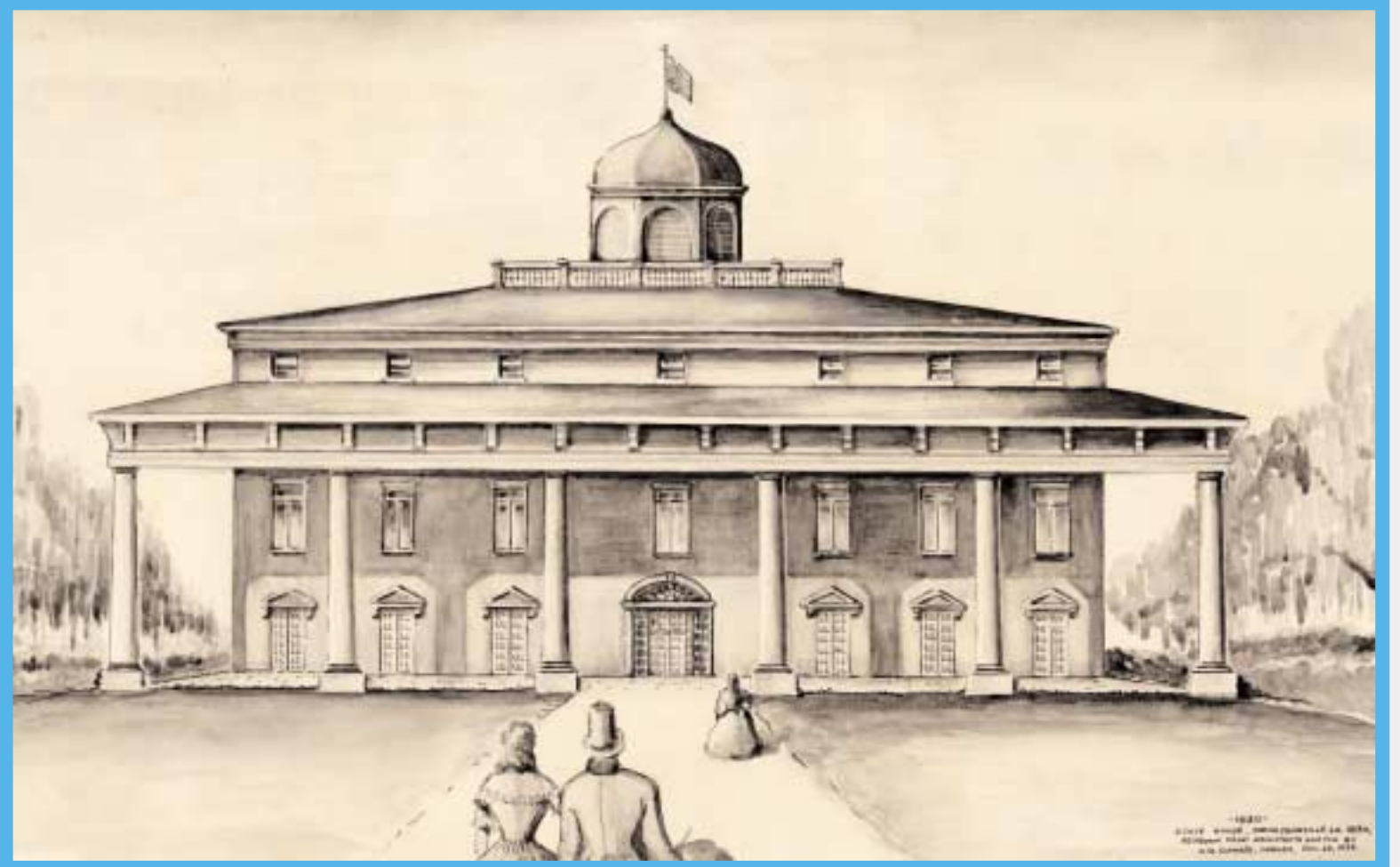
When legislators arrived in **Donaldsonville** for the 1830 session, they found the state house woefully inadequate. The legislators demanded it be improved. Meanwhile, the government convened elsewhere: the Senate in a local tavern, the House in an Ascension Parish courtroom.

Little work was accomplished while in Donaldsonville. A combination of dreary weather and lack of suitable amenities resulted in many legislators returning to New Orleans for extended weekends. With so few members present, committees could not do their work. Eventually, both houses considered moving the capital to Baton Rouge, but instead, the government returned to the Ursuline Convent in New Orleans three months later.

"Agreeable to present prospects, the law establishing the seat of Government at Donaldsonville will be repealed this year. The Legislature at this moment occupies the State House merely as tenant, the committee appointed to examine the building having refused to receive it. Besides which, Donaldsonville cannot afford the necessary accommodations for the Executive and Legislative departments"

Baton Rouge Gazette, 1/9/1830

Government Square



The Governor serving here was Jacques Dupre.

Improvements continued on the new state house, but when the legislature reconvened in Donaldsonville on January 4, 1831, they immediately agreed to return the capital to **New Orleans**, as much for the conveniences of a larger city as the shabbiness of the Donaldsonville State House.

Is That a Fact?

- Government Square was the first building specifically designed for Louisiana's capital.
- According to the *Courier*, Donaldsonville had a population of 492 in 1830.
- In 1830, New Orleans was the third largest city in the United States, after New York and Baltimore.
- After vacating the building, the legislature donated the state house to Ascension Parish for use as a seminary.
- Partially demolished in 1848, its bricks were later poured into the Mississippi to protect the levee. It was finally torn down after being shelled during the Civil War.